

Reducing Childhood Obesity: Public-Private Partnerships to Improve Nutrition and Increase Physical Activity in Children

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Testimony

Majority Leader Frist, Chairman Gregg, Senator Kennedy, Senator Wyden and other distinguished Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today regarding Nike's strong support of The Childhood Obesity Reduction Act and the important role public-private partnerships play in tackling this issue. Like of all of you, we at Nike are very concerned about the current epidemic of youth inactivity among children in the United States. It is a troubling fact that as a result of inactivity and diet, today parents have a longer life expectancy than their children.

As president of U.S. operations for the world's leading sports and fitness company and as a former physical education teacher, I am passionate about finding a solution to this national health crisis and proud to bring the commitment of Nike to work with you and others on this issue. Unhealthy weight results from two major sources: lack of physical fitness and poor nutrition. Nike's programs and efforts focus exclusively on the issue of physical fitness, and we trust that other companies will address nutritional challenges.

The Problem

Today, I want to talk about the role physical inactivity plays in fueling this national epidemic that threatens our youth. Health professionals agree that kids should take part in a minimum of 30 minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity daily.

Only one in four U.S. public school students attends regular P.E. classes. A 2000 study conducted by the CDC found that less than one in 10 elementary schools and roughly one in 20 junior and senior high schools provide daily P.E. all year in all grades.

We know the benefits of regular physical activity. Children who are physically active: reduce their risk of cancer and their– vulnerability to depression, anxiety and low self-esteem;

are more likely– to graduate from high school;

are less likely to use drugs;–

are less– likely to have an unwanted pregnancy;

are less likely to join gangs;– and

are less likely to develop an eating disorder.–

The benefits of regular physical activity also extend into the classroom. A 2002 California Department of Education study found significant correlations between physical fitness scores and reading and math scores on standardized tests for middle school children. Those children who scored highest on the physical fitness tests also scored highest on the standardized tests. And a 1999 study published in *Research Quarterly* showed that students who spent up to 200 percent more time in P.E. class (compared to students who spent that same time in the classroom) did as well or better on standardized test scores.

Nike Response to the Childhood Obesity Reduction Act

Nike is fully supportive of S.2551, and we believe this important legislation is a critical component in tackling this issue. On behalf of Nike's 12,000 U.S. employees – 6,275 of whom are in Oregon and 1,436 in Tennessee – we applaud Majority Leader Frist's and Senator Wyden's leadership on this matter.

The severity of this epidemic and its impact on our children's future requires new thinking and new approaches. The Childhood Obesity Reduction Act presents a unique opportunity for schools and communities to develop and implement real solutions to promote increased physical activity, reduce and prevent childhood unhealthy weight, and improve nutritional choices in schools.

Through the proposed Congressional Council on Childhood Obesity and the creation of a National Foundation for the Prevention and Reduction of Childhood Obesity, elementary and middle schools across the country will have the opportunity to partner with public and private entities to create successful strategies to tackle this issue at the local level.

Creating a Council and then a Foundation to support creative school programs is important for many reasons. First, it encourages creativity and rewards best practices for model programs. Second, it provides a convenient mechanism to garner additional private support for this growing crisis. However, as good as this legislation is, it alone won't solve this rising problem. A profound and long-term impact requires broader and other creative initiatives that must be well coordinated. We believe the Foundation created by this legislation could help play a key coordinating role.

Nike's Approach

In many ways, Nike's own thinking and approach toward addressing this national epidemic are very similar. Nike has a long history of supporting sport and physical activity programs. But three years ago, as we began to get a better understanding of the scope and scale of this health problem, we raised the stakes. We started by talking to experts in the field about the root causes and cures, and the role Nike could play in helping to address the issue. We evaluated the most effective programs that address youth inactivity and unhealthy weight. We looked for innovative and creative approaches that address youth physical inactivity from all directions and at all stages of childhood.

As a sports and fitness company, we know firsthand the value that daily physical activity can offer – both to kids and adults. And we recognize that through the power of our brand, we are in an excellent position to help tackle this issue. But we realize that as passionate as we are about getting kids active, we simply can't do this alone.

That is why we created a long-term, multi-stakeholder initiative to address youth inactivity called NikeGO. We have partnered with organizations whose expertise brings greater impact to the programs we build for inactive kids and the parents, teachers and coaches who influence their behavior. And we are using this same partnership strategy with the advocacy efforts we launch regionally and nationally to drive policy-level changes on this issue.

Today I would like to talk to you about four long-term NikeGO programs.

PE2GO

In the fall of 2003, NikeGO teamed up with an organization based at San Diego State University called SPARK (Sports, Play and Active Recreation for Kids) to create a program called PE2GO. SPARK is a research-based organization dedicated to creating, implementing and evaluating physical activity programs that promote lifelong wellness in children and youth.

PE2GO is a national, standards-based program designed by Nike and SPARK to help increase the quality and quantity of physical education in schools where P.E. classes have been drastically reduced or eliminated. Nike and SPARK deliver custom curriculum, training and equipment to classroom teachers, not P.E. teachers, to enable them to teach P.E. to fourth and fifth grade students in schools where P.E. classes have been drastically reduced or eliminated.

In the fall of 2003, PE2GO launched in six U.S. cities – Akron, Ohio; Chicago; Los Angeles; Memphis; New York; and Portland – reaching over 6,400 fourth and fifth graders in 43 elementary schools.

Here is an astonishing fact: Many of us grew up with the "old P.E.," which is still being taught to many of our kids today. PE2GO is designed to fix a significant problem plaguing those traditional P.E. classes, where kids spend only three and a half minutes of a half-hour class in active movement.

PE2GO is part of the "New P.E.," a movement where students no longer stand on the sidelines or in line waiting for a turn to play. All kids get the same opportunities to participate, develop skills and feel successful, and all kids are moving for the full 30 minutes.

Classroom teachers are involved because in many districts P.E. specialists see students only once a week – insufficient frequency and duration to achieve health benefits.

PE2GO provides schools with a self-contained, standards-based P.E. program that gives classroom teachers the tools to help get their kids moving three times a week for a minimum of 30 minutes each time.

Based on an evaluation by the CDC, the first year of PE2GO demonstrated more than just physical benefits:

- nine out of 10 kids– are more active, and enjoy it;
- three out of four kids learned physical– activities that can be enjoyed for a lifetime;
- three out of four kids– learned to cooperate with others and improve social skills;
- classroom– teaching skills improved; and the
- majority of kids’ sports and movement– skills, as well as fitness levels, increased.

Even more exciting, we see both teachers and kids develop a real commitment to the program. One of my favorite activities in this year’s lesson plans was a game called “Heart Attack.” This innovative tag game teaches children about healthy lifestyle choices and the important role physical activity plays in combating heart disease. The game with the alarming name allows kids to come to each other's aid and rescue their peers by exercising with them after they've been tagged and given a risk factor by someone who's "it."

In June of this year, we had the opportunity to demonstrate our interpretation of the “New P.E.” to Members of the Administration and Congress. Nike and SPARK were among the more than 50 organizations to participate in the HealthierUS Fitness Festival on the National Mall. The President’s Council on Physical Fitness and Sports joined with Secretary of Health and Human Services Tommy G. Thompson; Secretary of Education Rod Paige; U.S. Surgeon General Dr. Richard Carmona; and Congressmen Zach Wamp and Mark Udall, Co-Chairs of the Congressional Fitness Caucus, to organize and showcase activities and resources available to get Americans moving for health.

Native American Diabetes Prevention Program and NikeGO in Indian Country

Nike's Native American Diabetes Program is currently working closely with the diabetes program coordinators of some 80 tribal agencies across the United States. Nike provides product for their fitness promotion programs and partners with these tribes to offer mentoring and recreational events for the tribal population.

Nike will also partner with the National Indian Health Board and Indian Health Services to launch a national fitness program called "Just move it" targeted at tribal health programs, tribal schools and recreational programs with the goal of getting one million Native Americans active by 2006.

Nike and IHS signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to collaborate on the promotion of healthy lifestyles and healthy choices for all American Indian and Alaska Natives. The MOU is a voluntary collaboration between business and government that aims to increase dramatically the amount of health information available to American Indian and Alaska Native communities. The goal of the MOU is to help those

communities gain a better understanding of the importance of exercise at any age, particularly for those individuals with diabetes.

Reuse-A-Shoe/NikeGO Places

Creating places for youth to play is another component of NikeGO. For more than 11 years, the Nike Reuse-A-Shoe program has recycled and reused non-metal containing post-consumer and defective athletic shoes to turn them into NikeGO Places – sports surfaces such as football, baseball and soccer fields; basketball and tennis courts; tracks; and playgrounds.

Since the program began, we've collected more than 16 million pairs of shoes, and have helped donate more than 170 NikeGO Places around the world. In 2002, to celebrate our 30th anniversary as an Oregon-based company, we made our largest one-time surface donation with a \$2 million gift to Portland Parks Foundation to resurface 90 existing outdoor basketball courts in 35 Portland parks. Our partnership with Portland Parks & Recreation continues with after-school and summer programs.

Last year, Nike partnered with Congress and the National Recycling Coalition to collect shoes from congressional staffers to be used to build play surfaces. Senator Wyden has been a long-time advocate and supporter of the Reuse-A-Shoe program and recently sponsored and passed legislation to keep this program alive.

Other partnerships include the U.S. Soccer Foundation, where together we have awarded eight \$100,000 grants to be used toward world-class FieldTurf soccer fields to eight communities including Beaverton, Ore.; Hampton, N.H.; New York, N.Y.; Richmond, Va.; and St. Louis, Mo. This recent award is part of a five-year, \$5 million partnership between NikeGO and the U.S. Soccer Foundation to promote the sport of soccer across the United States by awarding 50 communities grants to be used toward the installation of FieldTurf soccer fields.

NikeGO Advocacy

In addition to in-school and after-school programs and creating safe places for kids to play, we are also lending our support to advocate for public policies that will drive real changes on this issue.

In November 2003, we co-founded Shaping America's Youth with the U.S. Surgeon General, the American Academy of Pediatrics, McNeil Pharmaceuticals, The Campbell Soup Company and others to develop a national, cross-sector initiative devoted to promoting physical activity and healthy lifestyles. A true private-public partnership, we launched the results of a three-month national survey last week that identified nearly 1,100 childhood physical activity, nutrition and weight management programs nationwide. Some of the most revealing data points include:

Of those surveyed, upwards of— an estimated \$7 billion is being invested in operational

programs in 2004;

40 percent of surveyed programs are only funded for a single– year;

Only 53 percent of programs had plans to measure outcomes and– thereby determine effectiveness;

Only 4 percent of all programs have– reported any outcomes; and

91 percent of those surveyed expressed a– strong need for a national dialogue, creations of partnerships and a need for national standards.

While the survey results highlight a significant commitment and level of investment, we have yet to make a real impact in reversing this trend. The need for a coordinated plan of action couldn't be more obvious. In March 2005, Shaping America's Youth will hold its first Town Hall Meeting in Memphis, Tenn., as part of a process to create shared language and recommendations that will lead to a national action plan. Majority Leader Frist, we welcome your participation in this event.

Nike also believes that one of the ways we can help reverse this trend of youth inactivity is to call for companies, organizations and government to work together to help bring daily P.E., taught by P.E. specialists, back to schools. We are using our knowledge and resources to talk to policymakers around the country about the importance of daily physical education classes.

As you indicate in your legislation, children spend a considerable amount of time in school, and schools are a powerful motivator for helping kids adopt healthy lifestyles. Several studies demonstrate that school-based P.E. programs are one of the most effective ways to facilitate activity in our youth.

In fact, a study released last month by the NIHCM Foundation found that expanding existing P.E. instruction nationwide to at least five hours per week for kindergarteners could reduce overweight levels in girls by 43 percent and in children at risk for overweight by 60 percent. Those are stunning outcomes, at very little cost.

By inspiring, enabling, and encouraging kids to be physically active, Nike has an opportunity to shape kids' lives now, and help them form positive habits and attitudes that last a lifetime. This opportunity can be realized in traditional ways – through products that perform well, images that show movement and athleticism – and through innovative community affairs programs that provide the resources, facilities, gear and coaching that kids need.

By reaching out to partners in the corporate, nonprofit and government arenas, we can help kids make changes and choices that remove obstacles between young people and physical activity. If we do, we can all help kids lead physically healthier lives and leave a legacy of strong mental, social and physical health.

We thank you for your leadership on this issue and look forward to working with you.